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ABSTRACT

The current status of world literacy can be revealed through recent UNESCO data: (1) the nations of the world spend an average of $7800 annually to train and equip one soldier, while spending only an average of $100 annually to educate one child; (2) a quarter of the world's population will not attend any school in this century; (3) more than 40 percent of the world's adult population is estimated to be unable to read and write; (4) 65 percent of the world's population is estimated to fall below the level of functional literacy when the criterion of fourth grade level of reading ability is used; and (5) in as many as eight European countries, illiteracy ranges from 10 percent to 65 percent of the population at age fifteen and above. The plurality of languages is a critical factor in the development of literacy. In such countries as Morocco, Angola, India, and Malaysia it is not uncommon to find one language recognized for official uses, another used in public schools and yet another used in private and parochial schools. Literacy cannot be diminished until this struggle for a common, unifying medium of human communication is resolved. (HOD)

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LINGUISTIC PLURALISM: IMPEDIMENT TO UNIVERSAL LITERACY

The type of world in which we now find ourselves demands and requires a repertory of intellectual skills which were not needed in the past. Today the subtle relationships between illiteracy and poverty, hunger, and disease throughout the world are being propounded with increasing acceptance. And functional literacy has become widely recognized as the indispensable, intellectual tool which enables man to cope productively with the technological demands of the late twentieth century.

In rich as well as poor regions of the world formal educational systems are dependent upon and vulnerable to other social, political and economic institutions. Nonetheless, all nations expect certain intellectual goals to be attained by citizens who have participated in structured educational experiences. Whether in essentially democratic or totalitarian systems, in advantaged or disadvantaged nations, the paramount product which the society expects from its investment in public education is functional literacy.

How well are the disadvantaged, underdeveloped nations progressing in developing universal literacy? What are the principal impediments to their achievement of this goal?

Relying largely upon information secured from school visitations and conferences with educators in Africa and Asia during the second

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semester in 1971-72, the foregoing questions will be discussed by presenting: (a) a brief review of the current status of world literacy; and (b) observations on some of the problems and issues concerning language dilemmas in education in selected nations.

CURRENT STATUS OF WORLD LITERACY

George Bereday (1969) and other students of comparative education have noted for some time that nations generally do not give high priority to investment in the training of the minds of their citizens. Incredible statistics in this regard were presented by René Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO, upon the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of UNESCO. He reported on the TODAY show on November 4, 1971 that the nations of the world spend an average of $7,800 annually to train and equip one soldier, while spending only an average $100 annually to educate one child.

As a result of this reluctance to support education adequately in both rich and poor nations, we are today faced with a very disquieting picture in the status of world literacy: the number of adult illiterates, rather than being on the decline, is actually increasing at the rate of twenty-five to thirty million persons a year (Malmquist, 1969). Educational progress though considerable, has not been enough to keep pace with the rapid population growth.

Recent UNESCO data (UNESCO, 1970) reveal further that: (a) 50 percent of the world's children of primary and secondary age are not attending school at all; (b) a quarter of the world's population will not attend any school in this century; (c) more than 40 percent of the world's adult population--

about 800 million--is estimated to be unable to read and write; (d) at least 65 percent of the world's population is estimated to fall below the level of functional literacy, when the criterion of fourth grade level of reading ability is used; and (e) even in as many as eight countries in Europe, illiteracy ranges from 10 percent to 65 percent of the population at age fifteen and above.

For many years the relationships between national independence, the democratic processes, and a literate citizenry have been demonstrated. Illiteracy, on the other hand, deters the development of both individual and national capacity. In fact, illiteracy is now regarded by perceptive world leaders as a threat to peace, for it divides nations within themselves and among one another into two groups--the literates and the illiterates. (Malmquist, 1969) It is recognized globally today that the "literated" are the best bets to become the self-sustaining, self-directing "liberated".

LINGUISTIC PLURALISM: THE LANGUAGE DILEMMA

The twentieth century has witnessed a death blow to colonialism and the freeing of millions of people to make their own political, economic and educational decisions. With the establishment of newly self-governing nations in Africa and Asia, the extent of the inequities in the distribution of the world's wealth has been highlighted. Today the whole world is concerned with what Adlai Stevenson referred to as "the revolution of rising expectations".

Universal literacy and relevant education are not the least among the rising expectations cherished by the two-thirds of the world's population which lives in the economically underdeveloped areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Although the disadvantaged nations vary widely in natural resources, climate, population, geography, and linguistic and cultural traditions, most have demonstrated that they believe that education is a major key to security and development.

During the Spring semester, 1972, the writer served as Visiting Professor of Education in the Chapman College, shipbased program of international study, WORLD CAMPUS AFLOAT. This multiple-learning experience combines classroom study while traveling at sea with related field experiences in the various ports of study. The Spring 1972 semester focused primarily upon underdeveloped nations in Africa and Asia. It was possible to study in these countries, both theoretically and empirically, some of the critical impediments to their effective attainment of educational expectations.

The primary impediments to the development of universal literacy which shall be the focus of this paper are the problems generated by the use of a multiplicity of languages within selected African and Asian nations. In pre-colonial and pre-literate times the absence of a single, national language to serve as a unifying vehicle of communication for all citizens did not present the problems which the lack of such an integrative, linguistic force poses today.

The use of a multiplicity of languages within one country or territory in certain African and Asian regions is a linguistic phenomenon of historical and cultural significance. Some anthropologists have postulated that this plurality of languages is the critical factor in the development of an ancient social organization which for the most part had been restricted geographically and limited to extended familial groupings. (Kuper, 1971 and Ottenberg, 1960)

When European colonization imposed an alien language which possessed a written form, also, as the tool of governmental, commercial, and educational communication, complex linguistic problems and issues emerged. It should be noted that in most African countries and in some Asian ones, there was no written form of the native languages when European colonization began.

While recognizing on the one hand the twentieth-century value of a language which has wide universal exchange, today in the new nations there are those whose petitions for a valid role for their native languages are motivated by indigenous cultural awareness. Situated as they are on the horns of this dilemma, the following questions are prominent on the agenda of educational planners in many recently decolonized nations: (It should be noted that arriving at concensus on these questions becomes exceedingly difficult when the nation is ethnically pluralistic and/or has several languages and dialects extant in addition to an inherited European language.)

(1) Which language shall be recognized as the lingua franca?

(2) Which language shall be designated as the official language?

(3) Which language shall be the language-of-instruction in the primary school?

(4) Which language shall be the language-of-first-literacy?

(5) Which language shall be the language-of-instruction in the secondary school? In the college and university?

Of the six African and seven Asian nations visited by the writer (WCA, 1971), four of them--Morocco, Angola, India, and The Federation of Malaysia--have been selected as archetypes of the issues which are the focus of this paper. In the ensuing sections, the status of the language dilemma as posed in the questions above will be reviewed in the target nations.

LINGUISTIC PLURALISM AND EDUCATION IN MOROCCO AND ANGOLA

At the International Conference on World Crisis in Education held October, 1967 at Williamsburg, Virginia, Carlos P. Romulo (1969) presented the major address on "The Deepening Crisis in Asian Education". His delineation of the language dilemma in Asia was observed as well by the writer in educational institutions in Africa. An excerpt from Romulo's essay follows which is particularly relevant and broadly applicable to this paper:

> It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that in many parts of Asia each school is veritable Tower of Babel... The language problem, perhaps more than any other, has been responsible for the confusion, the lack of direction, and, at times, the bitter conflict that characterize the school systems of Asia. . . . In many Asian countries primary and secondary students spend an inordinate amount of time trying to become familiar with alien tongues. Meanwhile, the schools are in quandry. Often the child

> begins with the vernacular at the lowest levels. . . but, after a few years, the student is told to abandon formal use of the vernacular and is required to learn a new language. . . .

For centuries Morocco has been influenced by the Mediterranean world with its fusion of European and Arabic cultures. Morocco had been a literate culture for ages prior to European colonization, but in spite of almost two decades of independence, problems inherited from colonial eras continue to intrude. Nowhere is it more visible than in the educational system in Morocco today which is identifiable as European and elitist in orientation.

In the 1950's shortly after gaining independence, the Moroccan government designated Arabic as the national language. This decree attempted to diminish (and eventually to eliminate) the use of French as the language of government, commerce, and education. Even so, today, only in the compulsory, tax-supported, public primary schools is Arabic the language-of-instruction. In the private and parochial primary schools, which are patronized by the sizeable European communities still residing in Morocco, French, Spanish, or English may be the languages-of-instruction and first literacy.

Admission to the secondary levels of Moroccan education is upon the basis of examination. Since the language-of-instruction in the lycees in French, the admissions examinations are for the most part in French. Thus, the Moroccan child who attends public primary school and expects to attain a secondary education must become functionally bilingual by his

twelfth or thirteenth birthday. Although instruction in the French language is available in the public primary school for secondary school aspirants, the number of public school students who successfully pass the lycee entrance test is minuscule.

As is the case for lycee admissions, entrance to the university is reserved for successful candidates who have passed a series of stringent examinations with superior scores. The linguistic vehicle of these examinations is not the vernacular, but French and/or English--the languages-of-instruction in the universities. These examinations are based upon a classical, continental curriculum and serve as an instrument for rigid, elitist selection for university matriculation.

The language dilemma in Morocco pales by comparison with the linguistic pluralism in modern Angola. The native Angolan student must master two or more European languages to a level of functional control in order to become literate and attain at least a secondary school education. High percentages of student attrition occur between the first and fourth years of the four-year, compulsory, public primary school. The small liceu enrollments, also, bare mute testimony to the difficulties experienced by native Angolan children in the secondary school.

By 1975 Angola will have been under the control of the Portugal four hundred years. Portuguese has become the official language and a Portuguese-based dialect has become the lingua franca. The indigenous, black population (especially those who live in the interior of the country) has traditionally spoken several African languages which are native to this region. The language-of-instruction in all public, primary schools, however, is Portuguese. Thus most native children must learn to speak and

comprehend Portuguese before they are able to begin reading instruction in the primary school.

The liceu, the Portuguese counterpart of the French-type lycée stresses to an inordinate degree the acquisition of French, English, and frequently German. The grave importance of functional control of these languages is understood when it is learned that the language-of-instruction in the university is customarily French or English.

As in Morocco, there are many private and parochial schools on both primary and secondary levels which are patronized by the children from the European communities and the privileged classes of the indigenous population. Customarily English or French is the language of instruction in these schools and gives their clients a significant advantage when competing for liceu and university entrance.

Vigorous, indigenous student protest in recent years in Morocco and Angola has been directed at the language-of-instruction issue, the irrelevance of the European curriculum, and at the examination system.

LINGUISTIC PLURALISM AND EDUCATION IN INDIA AND MALAYSIA

Perhaps in India, as nowhere in the world, may be found so visibly the myriad problems which beset education when there is a colonial language legacy and a multiplicity of indigenous languages within the borders of a nation. With fourteen Constitutionally recognized major languages and numerous local dialects, the issue of agreeing upon a national language is a matter of continuing, vital concern to the Indian people.

(Thut and Adams, 1964) Today with barely 36 percent of the citizens literate, facilitating the development of literacy is duly receiving high priority in India.

According to Mukerji (1951), the language dilemma in India is of past concern. And by the early nineteenth century, the following controversial issues had crystallized into the debate which is currently, critically important:

1. Should the basic educational objectives in India be that of promoting oriental learning, or the introduction of Western languages and culture?

2. Should the language-of-instruction be English, Persian and Sanskrit, the modern Indian vernaculars, or some appropriate combination?

With India's emergence from British colonial rule in 1947 and the establishment of the National Ministry of Education, the solution to the language problem has gradually taken the following form:

(a) Hindi has been decreed the national language (despite strong, continuing opposition in southern India); (b) the major regional languages are the languages-of-instruction at the elementary and secondary levels; and (c) opinion continues to be split on the language-of-instruction at the university level, with the adoption of a regional language gaining support over the traditional use of English.

It should be noted that these trends place a heavy language burden upon Indian secondary school students. For those students for whom Hindi is not the mother tongue, two additional languages--Hindi and English--must be mastered if they aspire to higher education and/or governmental and public service.

In Malaysia as in India the educational enterprise is under extreme pressure to play a dynamic role in stimulating the people in the realization of national goals. As in India, the Malays have had to make crucial decisions relating to their multiplicity of languages as they strive to attain universal literacy.

Within the five years of independence secured in 1957 after a forty-three year status as a British protectorate, the native Malay have won political control of the Federation of Malaysia. Thus, despite the presence of a more numerous Chinese ethnic group and large Indian, European, and Eurasian minorities (all of whom have historically used English and/or their native languages), Malay has been decreed recently as the official language. As such, governmental, commercial, and educational affairs all must begin to convert to the use of Malay in accordance with an established time schedule.

The magnitude of the educational problems involved in designating Malay as the national language is evident at once when one notes that one-half of all students in Malaysia currently attend private elementary and secondary schools in which English, Tamil, or Chinese are the languages-of-instruction. Yet, in spite of the difficulties which can be envisioned and the numerous obstacles which must be overcome, the Malaysian government is steadfastly attempting to establish a national language to serve as a common denominator of communication and unification.

IN SUMMARY

Robert Maynard Hutchins (1971) has dubbed politics "the architectonic science". He sees political interaction as the pivotal force which inexorably is forging world unification. Along with other thoughtful men Hutchins believes that the vital question at issue today is whether world unification will be achieved by conquest or consent. And they feel that the most pressing task of men everywhere is to see to it that this consummation is achieved by consent.

The central position in this paper has been that functional literacy is the signal "liberating art" and as such has a notable contribution to make to individual and national participation in the affairs of the world today. In Morocco, Angola, India, Malaysia and other developing nations, and in the United States of America, as well a struggle is in progress for a common, unifying medium of human communication. Common elements in the foregoing discussion of language dilemmas may be found in the current educational debate in the United States about the roles of nonstandard and standard language in the development of literacy in minority group children. This struggle, if won, will diminish the disunity of the Towers of Babel and foster instead the rise of the Citadels of Logos.

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